



NEWS RELEASE

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The Cleveland National Forest Participates in 2015 Tournament of Roses Parade

San Diego, CA – U.S. Forest Service rangers, firefighters and volunteers will join the U.S. Forest Service mule pack train for the 126th Rose Parade in Pasadena on January 1. The U.S. Forest Service equestrian entry will be a celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act and the historic role of mule teams and packers in supporting wildland firefighters and other backcountry operations.

"The Cleveland National Forest is proud to be a part of the 2015 Tournament of Roses Parade," said William Metz, Cleveland National Forest Supervisor. "These mules and packers are veterans of real fires and pack trips and demonstrate the historic and present day role of packers supporting Forest Service employees, volunteers and partners."

The entry is unique in that the parade mules are also working pack animals, having come off the frontlines of supporting wildfires across northern California for several months in the summer and fall. The mules are used for long treks deep into national forest wilderness areas to resupply firefighters and wilderness rangers. They're also uniquely suited to working at high altitudes and in the rugged terrain of the Sierra-Nevada, Trinity Alps and other mountain ranges in California.

The U.S. Forest Service Pack Stock Center for Excellence keeps the tradition of packing alive by continuing to train packers who support backcountry activities across the 20.8 million acres of national forest lands in California. The Center employs about 10 packers and about 150 working animals.

Six employees from the Cleveland National Forest are joining Forest Service leadership, firefighters, Smokey Bear and the pack train. Battalion Chief Jason Kraling and Fire Engine Operator Prawit Hess from the Descanso Ranger District; Engine Captain Joel Mortier and Firefighter Federico Avakian from the Palomar Ranger District; Fire Prevention Officer Jacob Carothers from the Trabuco Ranger District; and Emergency Dispatcher Lorenzo Miranda from the Supervisor's Office.

The Cleveland National Forest is California's southern-most National Forest, stretching from Orange and Riverside Counties to just a few miles north of the border with Mexico. U.S. Forest Service firefighters and cooperators have fought 1,449 wildfires that have burned 399,649 acres on national forest lands across California in 2014.



The mission of the Forest Service is to sustain the health, diversity and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations. The agency manages 193 million acres of public land, provides assistance to state and private landowners, and maintains the largest forestry research organization in the world. Public lands the Forest Service manages contribute more than \$13 billion to the economy each year through visitor spending alone. Those same lands provide 20 percent of the nation's clean water supply, a value estimated at \$7.2 billion per year. The agency has either a direct or indirect role in stewardship of about 80 percent of the 850 million forested acres within the U.S., of which 100 million acres are urban forests where most Americans live.

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